

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, January 2, 1892, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B. Jan. 2nd, 1892. My darling Mabel:

The New Year has opened unfortunately for me. Yesterday I found myself hora de combat — suffering — I suppose from too much flying machine — and Christmas plum pudding. A shooting match at the warehouse took Mr. Ellis from the laboratory so that experiments were stopped, and took Johnny and his brother away from the mountain. I walked up to the top — and found the sheep without a shepherd and a ram roaming round loose. This did not conduce to tranquillity of mind — and I returned to Lodge thoroughly done out — pain in head and — and — elsewhere!

Last night and this morning and quite Better now — dieting and etc. Took no dinner but walked to top of mountain — then went to laboratory.

Mr. McCurdy came in with George. I picked him up in my arms and kissed him and then playfully turned him head over heels and stood him on his feet. Unfortunately I did not notice that the little fellow had an axe in his hand at the time. The edge of the axe struck me over the eye — and I do not understand how the eyeball escaped injury. The edge was quits sharp and drew blood on the eyebrow at (a) and on the check below the eye at (b) and yet the eyeball in uninjured.

The eyelid must have closed automatically as there is a scratch on the upper eyelid — which can be seen when I shut it. Altogether an extraordinary escape. The cut is nothing — more a scratch than anything else — merely drawing blood that is 2 all — but had the axe been a quarter of an inch lower down — so as to have escaped the eyebrow — my eye would probably have run right out.

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As it is — I find it O.K. — and feel very thankful that I have it safe.

Series of experiments to determine relative value of brushing cylinder with plaster — and stirring plaster completed.

Result — both have their value. Plaster simply stirred is hard and glossy — but stirring alone does not get rid of air holes on record part. Brushing on the other hand gets rid of most of the air holes — but injures the surface of the plaster mould — leaving it soft and friable. Trouble is we have to brush the cylinder with plaster — till the plaster sets. This disturbs the arrangement of the molecules — and cohesion is weakened.

New point — brush and stir at same time it following way—

Brush the surface of the record with a soft tooth brush while it is in the mass of liquid plaster — This will expel air from grooves of record — and by stirring plaster lead air bubbles to rise to surface — and need not be continued long enough to interfere with the plaster after it has begun to set.

Think this will prove the solution of perfect moulds — without air holes.

New boiler tried on flying machine today — with smaller mozales. Orifice of nozzle = 1/100 of an inch. Rotation poor although pressure in boiler caused top and bottom to bulge out —

The rivets held — and thing did not buret. Yesterday 3 received a cable from “Nevi” which I translate to mean Nervi and signed “Anglais” — all of which I presume means that you are at the “Hotel Anglais” in Nervi. I only hope there has been no cause for your leaving Genoa. You were so set upon avoiding health resorts of all kinds that I am troubled by the change — especially as the word “well” does not appear in your telegram.

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The “open meeting” of the Jones Ladies' Club — on the 31st of December — was a most creditable one — The papers (with the exception possibly of Mrs. Taylors on the events of the week) — were very good.

They have hitherto been weak in music but much improved in this also.

The Tremaines were there — and as luck would have it — the question box — produced the question upon “The Khamsin.”

I enclose the answer given by Mr. McLean. The Constitution and By-laws was presented to the members. Think it is very well done.

Love to Elsie and Daisy — won't be long now before I start.

Your loving husband, Alec.